

RIOT CONTROL AND IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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THE COMING OF THE ROMAN PRINCIPATE IS OFTEN SEEN as marking a dramatic change not only in political organization but also in the authorities' capacity to control riots in the city of Rome.¹ From the dying days of the republic onward, troops came to be used in the city to suppress rioting. Eventually, permanent military forces were stationed in the capital.² It has been pointed out that this development raises a problem about the behaviour of the emperor in the city.³ On the one hand, it is claimed, the authorities could easily crush riots⁴ using troops. On the other, in Rome the emperor went to enormous lengths to maintain the favour of the urban population.⁵ A similar problem could be raised in relation to public benefactions bestowed by members of local élites in other garrisoned cities. In part, the answers to such problems lie in the entrenched ideology of euergetism,⁶ in the belief that the emperor should behave with *comitas* and *civilitas* toward the lower classes (Wallace-Hadrill 1982), and in the preference during the early principate for the formal participation of the *plebs* as a way of legitimizing various parts of the political process (Millar 1998). Moreover, it is the contention of this study that, at least at an abstract level, the élites of the empire were deeply ambivalent about using force to control riots, and about the likely success of doing so.

The numerous reports about riots contained in the sources often assume that riot control could be a bloody and dangerous affair for soldiers as much as for rioters, and that battles between rioters and soldiers could be enormously destructive to the physical fabric of the city. Furthermore, the élites of the empire

Much of the early research for this study was conducted in connection with my Oxford D.Phil. I should like to acknowledge with gratitude the financial support provided to me during this period by the James Fairfax-Oxford Australia Fund, the Faculty of Classics at Oxford, and Brasenose College. I also extend my warmest thanks to those who gave me the benefit of their advice at various stages of this project: F. G. B. Millar, N. Purcell, K. E. Welch, G. W. Clarke, A. G. Hug, the two anonymous referees of *Phoenix*, and, above all, A. W. Lintott, my D.Phil. supervisor. All remaining errors and imperfections are my own responsibility.

¹Yavetz 1969: vii, 10, 12; Davies 1977: 26; Yavetz 1986: 173; Griffin 1991: 40–41; Vanderbroeck 1987: 159–160; Nippel 1995: 98; Millar 1998: 124.

²For the history of the praetorian guard in Rome, see Durry 1938; Passerini 1939. For the urban cohorts, see Freis 1967.

³Yavetz 1969: vii; Griffin 1991: 40–41.

⁴In this paper “riot” is taken to mean the actual or threatened use of violence by a crowd. “Crowd” is used in Rudé’s sense of a “‘face to face’ or ‘direct contact’ group” rather than all sorts of collective phenomena (1964: 3).

⁵Yavetz 1969, especially 137–140; Newbold 1974: 140.

⁶Veyne 1976; Griffin 1991: 41–46; Lomas and Cornell 2003.

had a certain ambivalence toward the use of force against rioters. This ambivalence was still deeper among the élites of the Greek East. And in cases of non-violent demonstrations, ambivalence about the use of force turned to antipathy. Such attitudes about using violence were in part the logical consequence of beliefs about the human and material cost of riot repression. But they were also the natural result of various more general ideals about the imperial power's proper treatment of its subjects. Thus, even if stationing troops in a city actually improved the authorities' capacity to quell riots, it was not clear to members of the élites of the empire that those troops could and should be used to crush any riot or demonstration.

Of course, to argue for an élite ambivalence toward the use of troops is not to imply that the authorities in Rome and other cities were expected to remain passive in the face of rioting. This study will suggest that our sources show an expectation that the authorities should always do *something* in response to rioting. The point is, however, that a response involving *military force* was often considered inappropriate and counter-productive. This view in some sense qualifies the recent suggestion that in practice Roman emperors, governors, and magistrates only responded to riots when their own position, dignity, or authority was threatened.⁷ It is conceivable that this was what happened in practice, thanks to the limited nature of the resources that the Roman authorities had at their disposal for such purposes. But, whatever the reality, élite expectations and ideals were rather different.

I. REPORTS ABOUT RIOTS

One suspects that, on the subject of riot control during the Triumviral Period and Roman principate,⁸ one can only generalize safely about élite expectations and ideals. It is true that there is a sizeable modern literature which attempts to understand the aetiology of Roman riots.⁹ There have also been several (rather brief) attempts to enlist the sources to build a picture of how official responses to riots varied according to the nature and context of the riot, and how successful such responses were.¹⁰ This literature has tended to accept the sources' reports

⁷Nippel 1995: 90, 98, 110–112, cf. 83; Nippel 1988: 170, cf. 164. See too Erdkamp (2002: 115), who claims that the authorities tended not to respond violently to riots, except when the crowd "threatened to interfere in an unstable situation."

⁸For the sake of manageability, this paper focuses on reports of riots that supposedly occurred during the Triumviral Period and the principate, although this obviously involves an examination of fourth-century sources at times. On occasion, however, particularly illuminating incidents from the fourth century are examined.

⁹Whittaker 1964; MacMullen 1966: 172; Yavetz 1969: 33–35; Africa 1971; Jory 1984: 63; Slater 1994; Rowe 2002: 98–101; Erdkamp 2002: 98–107.

¹⁰On the question of the circumstances in which the authorities responded to rioting, see references above, 151, n. 7. On the question of the success of military responses to riots, see references below, 167, n. 78.

about riots more or less at face value.¹¹ Such an approach has a number of difficulties.

First, even when an extant report was written by an eyewitness (or a contemporary with access to eyewitnesses) its accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Riots are by their nature chaotic occasions, so it is difficult even for unprejudiced eyewitnesses to appreciate the exact course of events. In view of this, incorrect details may easily be added (or important ones missed). Riots are also often ideologically charged events, so unprejudiced witnesses are likely to be rare. One need only consider here the various accounts of the suppression of C. Gracchus to see how partisan sentiment could mould accounts of riots and their repression.¹² Scholars who have studied more recent riots have had to grapple with a similar problem. For instance, in his study of the crowd in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain and France, Rudé notes that in these societies formal descriptions of riots contained in texts such as contemporary memoirs and newspapers tend to report events from the perspective of the aristocracy and middle class. For these periods of history, however, there are many rather less partisan documentary sources such as prison, hospital, and court records—sources which can go some way toward correcting the distortions in accounts written by members of the more privileged classes (Rudé 1964: 11–12). In the case of Roman riots, the overwhelming majority of extant contemporary accounts come from an élite perspective.¹³ This is a significant impediment to our proper understanding of riots, which by their nature involve conflict between the ruling élite and the masses. And, in contrast to early modern Europe, documentary sources relevant to Roman riots simply

¹¹ See Evans 1997 for a discussion of the treatment of sources by Nippel (1995).

¹² The key texts are: App. *B Civ.* 1.24–26; Plut. *C. Gracch.* 13–17; Diod. Sic. 34/35.28a; Vell. Pat. 2.6; Oros. 5.12. The accounts differ on Gracchus' personal culpability in the death of Antyllus/Antullius: Diodorus claims Gracchus ordered his killing, but Appian claims he was killed by one of Gracchus' over-zealous supporters, and Plutarch shows knowledge of different traditions. There are differences on the question of whether the Gracchans possessed weapons at the time of their occupation of the Aventine: Plutarch stresses that Gracchus was not armed apart from a dagger and makes no mention of Gracchus' supporters being armed, but the other sources all stress that the Gracchans were armed. Descriptions of the nature of the forces employed by Opimius vary, with Plutarch claiming they were heavy infantrymen and Cretan archers (i.e., mercenaries), Livy's epitomator claiming that Gracchus called the People to arms, and the other sources referring vaguely to armed men of various sorts. There are many different versions of the death of Gracchus himself: see Hillard and Beness 2001.

¹³ The majority of our ancient reports about riots, be they primary or secondary, come from an "élite" perspective in that they were written by men who either are known to have taken part in government and administration at an imperial or a local level (e.g., Tacitus, Cassius Dio, and Herodian), or who came from wealthy families of the sort that were involved in local leadership, even if they themselves held no formal political positions (e.g., Dio Chrysostom and Philo of Alexandria). In a few cases, the personal origins of the writer are unknown, but his text makes it clear that he shared in the literary culture of the élite, and hence is at least likely to have internalized élite attitudes toward crowds and riots and their repression (e.g., Juvenal and the author[s] of the *Historia Augusta*). This study will not examine in detail reports of riots emanating from a non-élite perspective (e.g., the Christian martyr acts, and the apocryphal acts of the apostles).

have not survived on a scale to serve to correct the élite perspective of the literary texts.

A second problem with the extant reports about Roman riots stems from the fact that most of them do not come from contemporary texts, but were written decades or even centuries after the riots they describe. This raises the difficult problems of what sources the authors of secondary accounts used, and how they handled these sources. The majority of the extant secondary reports about Roman riots are preserved in the writings of historians and biographers such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio. Such authors generally relied most heavily on literary works written by other members of the élites of the empire.¹⁴ Oral traditions were occasionally used, but these traditions would mostly have been transmitted through the élite milieu of our extant authors (cf. Syme 1958: 176–177, 272–273, 299–303); indeed, our extant authors sometimes mention that a tradition was transmitted through their very own families.¹⁵ Sometimes “documentary” sources such as the *acta Senatus*, edicts, emperors’ speeches, and official inscriptions were employed by narrative historians, but, as the *Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* shows, documents need not be free of tendentiousness merely because they are “official” (cf. Millar 1998: 134).¹⁶ There is no particular reason to believe that our extant sources, when reporting riots, would have deviated from their usual habits and employed sources with a more demotic perspective. Riots are occasionally reported in sources emanating from a non-élite context: for instance, various riots appear in the apocryphal Acts of apostles and the so-called *Acta Alexandrinorum*.¹⁷ But the extant élite literary authors, with one possible exception in Eusebius, show no signs of having consulted sources of this sort (cf. *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.1–5.4.3). In fact, extant secondary accounts only rarely attribute their information about a riot to a source at all.¹⁸ It is interesting to notice in this context that a fragmentary

¹⁴For general discussions about the use of sources by these authors, see Syme 1958: 176–190, 271–303 (for Tacitus); Millar 1964: 34–38 (for Cassius Dio); Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 61–66 and Baldwin 1983: 101–213 (for Suetonius).

¹⁵For example, Cass. Dio 69.1.3; Suet. *Cal.* 19.3, *Otho* 10.1; Plut. *Ant.* 28.2, 68.4–5.

¹⁶Inscriptions were probably less relevant in the case of riots, since there are few contexts in which an event as unfortunate as a riot would have been commemorated on stone (Erdkamp 2002: 96). A few allusions to riots have been preserved epigraphically: *S.C. de Cn. Pisone patre* lines 155–158; *I.Eph.* 2.215 = *I.Magnesia* 114; *TAM* 4.1.3. Tacitus covers the first of these, the rioting surrounding the trial of Piso. He probably had seen the text of the decrees passed after the trial of Piso (Griffin 1997: 258), but he clearly did not use them as the main source for his account of the riot (*Ann.* 3.14; cf. Eck 1996: 250–251). Edicts and letters written on perishable materials mentioning riots would perhaps have occasionally been available to historians: cf. Joseph. *AJ* 19.280–285; Tcherikover and Fuks 1957: nos. 153, 435.

¹⁷For riots in the apocryphal acts, see below, 162, n. 55. See too *PMich* 8.477–478; *CPJ* 158a and b; Benoît and Schwartz 1948.

¹⁸The few instances of such attributions are less than satisfactory. (1) Philostr. *VA* 5.26 attributes an incident in which Apollonius discusses rioting in Alexandria to “Damis,” Apollonius’ supposed companion and biographer; however, there are serious doubts about the existence of “Damis” and Philostratus’ use of him as a source (cf. Jones 2001 and literature there); there are also doubts about

specimen of the so-called *Acta Alexandrinorum* seems to describe a riot preceding Caracalla's massacre of the Alexandrians in 215 (Benoît and Schwartz 1948). The conventional historical texts mention no riot and present the act as a random act of cruelty, suggesting that their version stemmed from an entirely different tradition.¹⁹ And even if one could be sure of the origins of a report about a riot, there is always the distinct possibility that the extant author has modified the information. For example, it has been plausibly suggested that Herodian used Cassius Dio's account of the riots surrounding the fall of Cleander in 190, but reworked it heavily to suit his own tastes.²⁰ In short, then, the chances of our secondary sources preserving anything other than an élite version of a given riot are remote; indeed, these sources commonly describe the crowd's behaviour with abusive and snobbish language (Yavetz 1969: 141–155 with note 24 below).

A final problem is raised by the actual role played by reports about riots in our historical sources. Mostly a riot is reported not because it is interesting in itself, but because it is germane to the author's discussion of high political history. This means that most of the surviving reports about riots are fairly brief, and so there is a good chance that even an author lacking tendentious intent omitted details that might have altered our perception of the crowd's behaviour or the authorities' response to the riot. This problem is illustrated by the frequency with which different sources give accounts of the same riot which differ in key details.²¹ Furthermore, most riots are reported in only one extant source, so one cannot attempt to build a composite picture from several sources. Moreover, in

the historicity of the riot itself (cf. Barry 1993: 22 and literature there). (2) Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 4.2.6 makes reference to Greek historians who wrote about the Jewish revolt of 115–117, but it is not clear who these were or whether they wrote specifically about the rioting in Alexandria connected with the revolt. (3) SHA *Maximus et Balbinus* 9.3 vaguely refers to a detail given by "others" (*ut alii dicunt*) regarding a riot against Balbinus in 238. (4) Vict. *Caes.* 33.31 introduces details of the rioting surrounding the fall of Gallienus in 268 with the unhelpful formula *satis constat*. (5) The author of SHA *Aurel.* 39.2–4 purports to quote a letter written by Aurelian about the riot of the mint workers during his reign, although whether this attribution is believable depends on one's general view of the reliability of the *Historia Augusta*. (6) Joseph. *AJ* 18.257 mentions the rioting between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria which prompted Philo's embassy to Gaius (cf. Philo *In Flacc.* and *Leg.*), and later purports to quote an edict of Claudius which makes reference to these disorders (*AJ* 19.280–285). However, he does not explicitly attribute his information in *AJ* 18.257 to this text, and one doubts that this would have been his primary source of information about such a prominent event in Jewish history.

¹⁹ Cass. Dio 78.22–23; Hdn. 4.8.6–9.8; SHA *Caracalla* 6.2–3.

²⁰ Alföldy 1989. The key passages are Hdn. 1.12.3–1.12.9 and Cass. Dio 72.12.5–72.14.4.

²¹ For varying reports of the same riot, see: Cass. Dio 42.23.1–24.1, *Caes. B Civ.* 3.21 (on the response of the senate and Servilius to Caelius' incitement of a riot in 48 B.C.); Cass. Dio 48.31, *App. B Civ.* 5.67–68, cf. Gowing 1992: 190 (a riot against Octavian and M. Antonius in 38 B.C.); Joseph. *BJ* 2.223–227, *AJ* 20.105–112 (a riot in Jerusalem during the procuratorship of Ventidius Cumanus, 48–52); Suet. *Claud.* 18.2, Tac. *Ann.* 12.43 (a riot against Claudius in 51); Joseph. *AJ* 20.118–136, *BJ* 2.232–246, Tac. *Ann.* 12.54 (the lynching of some Galilaean pilgrims in a Samaritan town in 52); Hdn. 1.12.3–9, Cass. Dio 72.12.5–14.4 (the riots leading to the fall of Cleander in 190); SHA *Did. Iul.* 4.2–4.10, Cass. Dio 74.13.3–5 (the riots which greeted the accession of Didius Julianus in

view of the political focus of most of our sources, it is possible that the riots reported at greatest length are those which had the strongest ramifications for political history (cf. Erdkamp 2002: 96–97). This means that claims about the actual political preconditions for the military repression of riots should provoke unease. We might expect, for instance, to find military responses recorded more often for riots threatening the position of the emperor, simply because such riots tend to be more fully reported.

Thus, reports of the repression and punishment of rioters cannot be taken as sound evidence for what the authorities actually did in response to riots, or for what actually happened when they dispatched troops to repress riots or responded in some other way. One even doubts how useful these reports are in understanding the aetiology of riots in the Roman world. At best they present us with a selection of stereotypes about what caused riots.²² These stereotypes may not be entirely untrue, but nevertheless they are likely to be tainted with class prejudice. They are also likely to be naïve, since the Romans lacked the analytical tools of the modern sociologist. These reports are, however, useful for another purpose: they reveal élite ideals concerning when and how riots should be repressed, and élite expectations concerning what tended to happen when repression was attempted. Such reports can be used to shed light on what Gruen (1998: 567) has described as “the long neglected issue of what constitutes an acceptable level of public order for the Romans and the means whereby to obtain it.” Examining the way in which events are reported and the comments authors make about them reveals something of such élite ideals and expectations, especially when reports are read alongside more generalized statements concerning rioting and public order. It is also instructive to study these reports as a body, so as to reveal recurrent motifs.²³ In identifying such motifs, it is important to realize that we are not quite dealing with rhetorical *topoi*.²⁴ But we do find common motifs that are stressed or perhaps invented as a consequence of standard patterns of élite thought. Some of these

193); Benoît and Schwartz 1948, Cass. Dio 78.22–23, Hdn. 4.8.6–9.8, SHA *M.Ant.* 6.2–3 (a riot in Alexandria in 215 and Caracalla’s massacre of the Alexandrians).

²² See Walter 1980 for an illuminating analysis of a bout of rioting in seventeenth-century England. His discussion makes clear the gap between upper-class stereotypes regarding the causes of riots and the actual social and economic conditions which produced the disorder, conditions which were far more complex than a simple food shortage.

²³ Stoops (1989: 81) has already used a similar approach in analyzing the riot of the silversmiths at Ephesus reported at *Acts* 19.23–41, arguing that “a number of motifs recur with regularity in reports of rioting connected with Jewish rights, and many of those motifs appear in *Acts* 19:23–41.”

²⁴ Riots do appear in declamations and rhetorical handbooks: for example, Sen. *Controv.* 3.8; ps.-Quint. *Decl. maior.* 11; Aelius Theon *Progymnasmata* 14 [ed. Patillon and Bolognesi]; Sopater *Solia on the Staseis of Hermogenes* 6.469 [ed. Walz]. It may well be the case that the sources’ often-repeated claim that a mob was fickle and irrational (cf. Yavetz 1969: 141–155) originated from, or at least was perpetuated partly by, riot scenes in rhetorical works: *Auct ad Her.* 4.68: *deinde vaga multitudo . . . fugere coepit* (“then the fickle mob . . . begins to flee”); cf. 4.67; Sen. *Controv.* 3.8: *mota semel multitudo modum non servat* (“Once stirred up, a mob knows no boundaries”); ps.-Quint. *Decl. maior.* 11.7: *nihil est facilius quam in quemlibet adfectum movere populum; nulli, cum coimus, sua*

motifs might even reasonably be called literary *topoi*. One usually cannot tell whether these standard features in the presentation of riots are a reflection of the flavour of the sources used by an extant author, or a product of his redaction of his source materials. Whatever the case, however, they do reflect the general ideals and expectations of the élites of the empire.²⁵

II. WHEN SHOULD THE AUTHORITIES RESPOND TO RIOTS?

The first point that arises from reading reports about Roman riots with such a focus is that our authors tend not to explain official responses to riots by reference to a desire on the part of an emperor, governor or magistrate to preserve his own threatened position or dignity, at least not explicitly.²⁶ Rather, events tend to be presented in such a way as to imply that there was a natural connection between the riot and the authorities' response, be it military or otherwise. The fact that the authorities would seek to do something about a riot is, in other words, not seen as a fact demanding special explanation. This is a striking pattern, especially since it has been claimed that emperors and provincial governors tended to mobilize troops against rioters only when their own authority, dignity and position were threatened.²⁷ Given the limited military resources at the authorities' disposal, it is possible that this is what happened in practice. The assumption of our sources about what did and should happen is, however, rather different.

Of course, in some instances, the natural inference from the text is that the preservation of position or dignity did motivate the person making the decision to send troops against rioters or to respond in some other way to a riot. For instance, the author of the *Historia Augusta* claims that troops were used to force back the crowd which had been abusing, stoning, and obstructing Didius Julianus immediately after his controversial accession in 193. Presumably, the reader is meant to assume that the new emperor used the troops to do this because the crowd's actions threatened his dignity, legitimacy, and physical safety.²⁸ But it

cogitatio, sua mens, ulla ratio praesto est, nec habet ulla turba prudentiam singulorum ("Nothing is easier than arousing the people to whatever passion you like; when we assemble, no one possesses his own judgment, his own mind, or any rationality, nor does any crowd have the good sense of individuals"). There is no sign, however, of declamations involving riots whose factual matrix included acts of military repression carried out by the authorities. This is perhaps unsurprising. The imagined city of Greek declamation (see Russell 1983: 21–39) seems not to have had any military forces capable of suppressing riots. When Latin declamations presuppose a Roman city, it is evidently a city without a garrison. Consequently, no set narrative form for reporting riot repression emerged from rhetorical works (see Stoops 1989: 81). There are, however, various declamations in which men are tried for stirring up riots: Sen. *Controv.* 3.8; Sopater *Scolia on the Staseis of Hermogenes* 6.469 [ed. Walz].

²⁵ See Erdkamp 2002: 107–110 for a similar use of the ancient sources to examine the "moral economy" of the élites of the empire relating to food supplies.

²⁶ Cf., however, Joseph. *BJ* 2.226.

²⁷ Above, 151, n. 7.

²⁸ SHA *Did. Iul.* 4.2–6. Cassius Dio's account of the same incident (74.13.3–5), although differing in some critical details, could also be interpreted to imply this. Similar reports of riots include: App.

is often very difficult to infer such a personal motive from the facts presented. For instance, Tacitus' report of the official response to the amphitheatre riot at Pompeii in 59 includes discussion of the delegation of the trial from the emperor to the senate, and then to the consuls; the exile of the ringleaders; the dissolution of illegal *collegia*; and the banning of similar meetings for ten years. There is no hint that Nero, the senate, or the consuls acted to preserve their positions or dignity. To take another example, Dio Chrysostom reports the military repression of a riot in Alexandria by a certain "Conon."²⁹ The orator simply assumes that this was a natural response for a Roman official confronted with a riotous situation, and no explanation of his motives is offered. The same could be said of Plutarch's report of a riot between the inhabitants of Oxyrhynchus and Cynopolis over a breach of religious taboos: the punitive response of the Romans is referred to with no further need for explanation.³⁰

In view of the general expectations that the élites of the empire had of the Roman authorities regarding public order, it is unsurprising that the sources frequently present the authorities' response to a riot as an unremarkable consequence of the violent disorder itself, rather than of the character of its causes. These expectations are reflected in Velleius' highly idealized catalogue of the blessings of Tiberius' reign: Tiberius, we are told, was responsible for the removal of *seditio* from the Forum and from the theatre.³¹ Fronto likewise counts the checking of *seditio* amongst the duties of the emperor.³² The obligation to combat large-scale public disorders was assigned to lower magistrates as well: the Severan jurist Ulpian claims that the duties of the urban prefect included "keeping the peace among the citizens and maintaining order at public spectacles," and that prefects should post *stationarii* (i.e., soldiers with policing duties) at various locations within the city to keep the peace and report to the prefect what is happening.³³ The critical feature of these statements is that the duty of the imperial authorities to suppress *seditio* is expressed as a general and unqualified one. It is interesting to notice that a similar pattern of thought existed when it came to ideas about

B Civ. 5.67–68; Cass. Dio 48.31, 72.13.3–5, 78.22–23; Dio Chrys. 32.71–72; *Epit. de Caes.* 15.9; Hdn. 1.12.3–9, 4.8.6–9.8, 7.4.2–6, 7.10.5; ps.-Sen. *Oct.* 780–855; SHA *M.Ant.* 6.2–3, *Maximus et Balbinus* 9.1–4, *Tyr. Trig.* 22.1–6; Str. 17.819; and Tac. *Ann.* 1.77, 12.43, 14.61, 16.23.

²⁹ See Jones 1997: 249 and literature cited there for the debate over whether the reading "Conon" is a corruption in the manuscript tradition.

³⁰ Plut. *Mor.* 380b–c. For other examples, see Caes. *B Civ.* 3.21; Tcherikover and Fuks 1957: no. 153; Cass. Dio 42.23.1–24.1, 54.6.2, 54.7.6, 54.10.1–5, 60.17.3, 69.8.1a; *I.Eph.* 2.215 = *I.Magnesia* 114; Joseph. *AJ* 19.278–285, *BJ* 2.490–498, 7.47–54; Sen. *Clem.* 1.15.1; Suet. *Tib.* 37, *Claud.* 25; Tac. *Ann.* 13.48; Vett. Val. 5.10 p.231 [ed. Kroll].

³¹ Vell. Pat. 2.126.2: *summota e foro seditio . . . compressa theatralis seditio . . .*

³² Fronto *Ep.* Vol. 2 p.58 [ed. Haines]: *nam Caesarum est . . . seditiosos compescere.*

³³ Dig. 1.12.1.12 (Ulpian) [tr. Watson et al.]: *quies quoque popularium et disciplina spectaculorum ad praefecti urbi curam pertinere videtur: et sane debet etiam dispositos milites stationarios habere ad tuendam popularium quietem et ad referendum sibi quid ubi agatur.* Cf. Joseph. *BJ* 2.224 = *AJ* 20.106–107 for the routine stationing of troops in Jerusalem during festivals to prevent disorders.

the authorities' duties in respect of another great public order problem in the Roman empire: brigandage. An important element of imperial ideology was the notion that Roman power guaranteed *pax*, a concept which denoted freedom not just from war but also from violent crime (Yannakopoulos 2003: 875–878). As a consequence, it was commonly said that the *princeps* was responsible for the elimination of piracy³⁴ and land-based brigandage.³⁵ It is often said that, in reality, the limited resources at the disposal of the Roman authorities would have meant that they acted to repress pirates and bandits only on rare occasions, perhaps only when imperial interests were threatened or an influential person made a complaint.³⁶ Whatever the reality, the ideology was rather different. The same was the case, it seems, with rioting.

The idea that the authorities did or should respond to riots in all circumstances appears explicitly in two reports of specific riots. Suetonius reports that during the reign of Tiberius the people of Pollentia impounded the body of a *primipilaris* in their forum and refused to release it until the man's heirs had agreed to fund a gladiatorial contest. The emperor responded by having two cohorts descend on Pollentia and by clapping the decurions and most of the populace into *perpetua vincula* (Suet. *Tib.* 37.3). The incident is reported by Suetonius in a catalogue of measures that Tiberius took for the public good (*ad utilitates publicas*) before he supposedly turned autocratic (Suet. *Tib.* 33–37), so Suetonius' assumption is that the authorities (in this case the emperor) were not responding to the riot out of self-interest. Specifically, Suetonius groups the incident with various other claims about steps the emperor took to secure public order. These incidents appear under a general rubric: "he especially took care to protect the peace from highway robbery and brigandage and the disorderliness of seditions."³⁷ A list of measures then follows. Apart from the resolution of the situation in Pollentia, these include improved arrangements for security forces within Italy and Rome (37.1); measures connected with theatre riots (37.2); the abolition of the right of asylum throughout the empire (37.3); and the punishment of the Cyzicenes for their mistreatment of Roman citizens (37.3). The actions taken against the disorders at Pollentia are seen, therefore, as part of Tiberius' general desire to secure public order, and not as an attempt to avoid a threat to his own position or dignity.

Also instructive is the story found in the *Historia Augusta* about the circumstances of Aemilianus' supposed assumption of imperial power. The author says that Aemilianus claimed the purple because a crowd, for some trivial reason,

³⁴ Braund 1993; De Souza 1999: 195–197.

³⁵ App. *B Civ.* 5.132; Arr. *Epict. diss.* 3.13.9–10; SHA *Sev.* 18.6; Suet. *Aug.* 32.1; Vell. Pat. 2.126.3; cf. Shaw 1984: 33–34, 43, 47.

³⁶ Rostovtzeff 1905: 297; Millar 1981: 66–67; Hopwood 1983: 173, 182, n. 2; Braund 1993: 207; Nippel 1995: 100, 103, 113.

³⁷ Suet. *Tib.* 37.1: *in primis tuendae pacis a grassaturis ac latrociniiis seditionumque licentia curam habuit.*

besieged his house, and he saw the assumption of imperial power as the only means of self-preservation. The story is dubious and its internal logic opaque, but it is interesting because it is prefaced by a general discussion of public order in Alexandria. Repeating the *topos* of the frivolity and turbulence of the Alexandrian crowd, the author alleges that riots break out as a consequence of “slaves’ boots” and other such trivialities. The resulting disorders, he claims, often are of a scale that threatens the *res publica* and “accordingly troops have been armed against them.”³⁸ The author’s assumption is, therefore, that even riots whose causes are trivial can constitute a threat to the *res publica*. The purpose of the military forces in Alexandria is to suppress such riots and thereby avoid such threats—even when the riots spring from causes which are apolitical and are not connected with the personal standing or dignity of Roman officials, causes such as slaves’ boots.

It was not just members of the western élite who believed that riots of all types ought to (and frequently did) lead to a response from the Roman authorities. As mentioned already, Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom are found reporting repressive measures as if they were simply the natural result of a riot.³⁹ Greek authors of the principate are also found ascribing a general concern for riot control to the republican authorities. Appian presents the senate as believing that the riotous situation in Rome in 52 B.C. needed some sort of remedy (θεραπεία), and hence looking to Pompey (*B Civ.* 2.23). Plutarch, in discussing the same incident, imagines Cato begrudgingly coming to the view that Pompey should be called upon to act as sole consul as a result of the need to choose a moderate remedy (ἵαμα) for the evil (τὸ κακόν) of public disorder (*Cat. Min.* 47.2). Elsewhere, he describes the incident as Cato calling on Pompey to take charge of promoting public order (*Pomp.* 54.3).

Moreover, Jewish writers assume that Roman governors were under a positive obligation to intervene in riots, an assumption that is not surprising in view of how frequently the Jewish inhabitants of the empire were the target of rioting. Such an assumption runs throughout Philo’s *In Flaccum*. In accordance with one of the conventions of ancient biography, Philo assigns to Flaccus a good period at the start of his prefecture. During this period, Philo claims, Flaccus’ statesmanlike deeds included the establishment of good order (εὐνομία) throughout the city and the countryside by measures such as the repression of clubs (ἐταιρείαι) and societies (συνόδοι, 4–5), and the expulsion of Isidorus, who was the author of much of the disorder in the city (135–145). In the later stages of his prefecture, Flaccus failed in his duty to maintain public order, in Philo’s view. Philo alleges that Flaccus was approached by members of the Greek community of the city with a proposal that he should “surrender and give up the Jews,”⁴⁰ thereby winning

³⁸ SHA *Tyr. Trig.* 22.2: *saepe illi* [sc. *populi Aegyptiorum*] *ob neglectas salutationes, locum in balneis non concessum, carnem et olera sequestrata, calceamenta servilia et cetera talia usque ad summum rei publicae periculum in seditiones, ita ut armarentur contra eas exercitus, pervenerunt.*

³⁹ See above, 157.

⁴⁰ §23: . . . μεῖζον δ’ ἀγαθὸν οὐδὲν αὐτῇ παρέξεις ἢ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἐκδοῦς καὶ προέμενος.

the support of the Greek community, which would intercede on his behalf with the emperor Gaius. Flaccus assented to this proposal, even though, says Philo “it was his duty to repulse and scorn the speakers as revolutionaries and common enemies.”⁴¹ As a consequence of this assent, Flaccus was supposedly complicit in the insults directed by rowdy crowds at the visiting King Agrippa, even though, in Philo’s view, he ought to have arrested and punished those who insulted the king, especially given that an unruly mob will not stop with just one crime (30–35, 40–41). Next, he is said to have been complicit in the erection of images in synagogues (41–42). Finally, he permitted the Greeks to riot against the Jews of the city, which Josephus condemns as a “profession of tyranny” on Flaccus’ part.⁴²

Josephus also assumes that governors have a duty to respond to riots. This expectation is clear in his report of the events which resulted from the lynching of some Galilaean pilgrims in the Samaritan village of Ginae (or Gema).⁴³ In the *Antiquities*, Josephus claims that the procurator of Judaea, Ventidius Cumanus, was bribed by the Samaritans and therefore “neglected to avenge” (τὴν ἐκδίκησιν ὀλιγώρησεν) the murdered Galilaean, a statement that probably contains an implicit condemnation of the procurator (*AJ* 20.119).⁴⁴ Josephus then says that the Galilaean incited the Jewish masses to take up arms, urging them to protect their liberty (ἐλευθερία) and representing Cumanus’ behaviour as an insult (ὕβρις) to the Galilaean community (*AJ* 20.120). Again, then, we find the belief that a governor should respond in some way to a riot.⁴⁵

III. HOW SHOULD THE AUTHORITIES RESPOND TO RIOTS?

Saying that there was often an expectation amongst the élites of the empire that the Roman (and sometimes the local) authorities would respond to a riot raises the question of precisely what the authorities were expected to do in response to a particular riot. On this question, the sources reveal a nuanced set of expectations, which again were not entirely consistent with each other. One principle, however, appears fairly consistently in the sources: that an emperor, governor, or magistrate confronted with a riot ought, if possible, to avoid the use of force to quell it, and not take drastic punitive measures in the wake of the riot.⁴⁶ In a sense, this is an application to riots of the principle enunciated by Seneca: that it is the duty of a *princeps* to resort to punishment only when all other remedies (*remedia*) have

⁴¹ §24: ἐπὶ τούτοις ὀφείλων ἀπόσασθαι καὶ δυσχερᾶναι τοὺς λέγοντας ὥς νεωτεροποιῶν καὶ κοινοῦς πολέμους συνεπιγράφεται τοῖς λεχθεῖσι.

⁴² §54: οὐδὲν τὸ ἂν εἴη τυραννίδος ἐπάγγελμα μείζον. On the structure of the complex argument in §54, see Box 1939: 99.

⁴³ Joseph. *AJ* 20.118–136, *BJ* 2.232–246; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 12.54.

⁴⁴ The parallel passage in the *BJ* (2.233) simply has Cumanus treating the Galilaean petition as less important than other matters with which he had to deal.

⁴⁵ See too Joseph. *BJ* 2.296 for another statement about the obligation of a procurator (Gessius Florus) to quell inter-ethnic rioting.

⁴⁶ Cf., however, Griffin 1991: 40, suggesting that emperors in practice did not hesitate to use force against rioters.

been exhausted (*Clem.* 1.14.1). Libanius enunciates explicitly how this principle should be applied to rioting: rioters are out of their minds; therefore, just as one should pity and try to correct the insane with medicine, so too with rioting cities (*Or.* 19.8–11). He still assumes that an emperor should do something about a riot, but rejects the appropriateness of punishment (*Or.* 19.24), and stresses that the emperor's response should display clemency (ἡμερότης; *Or.* 19.18–19, cf. 11–13).

For many of the authors who discuss riots, the favoured *remedium* seems to have been for a great man to use his personal standing in the eyes of the crowd to convince it, either in person or by an edict or letter,⁴⁷ to desist from its destructive behaviour. This preference is seen in a number of *obiter dicta* in reports about riots. The *Epitome de Caesaribus* contains a report about Antoninus Pius being stoned by a crowd during a grain shortage (15.9). The epitomator (or his source) uses the incident to show that the emperor was merciful (*mitis*): he chose to placate the *seditio* with plain reasoning rather than to exact retribution. The emperor's behaviour is thus praised as being in conformity with the often-stressed imperial values of mercy and moderation.⁴⁸ For practical reasons as well it was sometimes seen as preferable for an emperor or governor to try to quell the riot by making a personal appeal. Cassius Dio, when reporting that Hadrian calmed *stasis* in Alexandria with a letter, comments that the incident demonstrates how the emperor's word is mightier than the sword.⁴⁹ Practical considerations also apparently prompted the governor of Asia to reprimand the rioting bakers of Ephesus in an edict (which is preserved in an inscription): the governor stresses that the instigators deserved to be arrested and put on trial, but that he had opted for an edict reprimanding and threatening them, since the welfare of the city was more important than the punishment of the offenders.⁵⁰ The practical justification and that based on the ideology of mercy and moderation could also coexist: Cassius Dio's report of Caesar's quelling of the rioting of 47 B.C. also assumes that his unexpected personal appearance before the rioters succeeded where Antony's military measures had failed. At the same time, he stresses that Caesar's refusal to do anything more heavy-handed was an instance of his habitual clemency (42.33.1–3).

This ideological preference for leaders to use personal standing makes it unsurprising that many reports of riots contain accounts of personal appeals to a crowd on the part of political leaders and other members of the élite.⁵¹ There

⁴⁷ Edicts, of course, would often be read before the people (cf. Tcherikover and Fuks 1957: no. 153, col. I), so they too involved the same element of oral performance as a personal appearance.

⁴⁸ For moderation as a virtue appropriate to an emperor, see Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 41–42 and references there. On the appropriateness of these virtues for a provincial governor, see Apul. *Flor.* 9, 17.

⁴⁹ Cass. Dio 69.8.1a: οὕτω που πλέον ισχύσει αὐτοκράτορος λόγος τῶν ὀπλῶν. Cf. SHA *Hadr.* 12.1.

⁵⁰ *I.Eph.* 2.215 = *I.Magnesia* 114. See Buckler 1923: 30–33 for translation and commentary.

⁵¹ *Acts* 19.23–41; App. *B Civ.* 5.68; Cass. Dio 42.33.2, 48.31.6, 54.1.4, cf. 54.10.5; Dio Chrys. 46, 32.72; *Epit. de Caes.* 15.9; Joseph. *BJ* 2.11–13, 2.490–498, 2.595–613; Lucian *Alex.* 45, *Demon.* 64;

are also several instances in which emperors or magistrates are said to have used edicts or letters to try to check rioting.⁵² The scene of the man of great personal standing calming the crowd was something of a literary *topos*. It is used by poets, most famously by Vergil in an extended metaphor;⁵³ it appears in the early books of Livy in stories that must be largely fictitious;⁵⁴ and it is even found in the rather more demotic apocryphal acts of the apostles, with apostles in the process of being martyred dissuading sympathetic crowds from killing the leader of the persecution.⁵⁵ This raises the suspicion that this *topos* is simply being reproduced in some of the supposedly historical reports of riots; for instance, the various passages in which Philostratus reports that Apollonius of Tyana quelled a riot through personal charisma are prime candidates for such suspicion (Philostr. *VA* 1.15, 1.16, 5.26). But comparative evidence should perhaps restrain the assumption that this can never have been an effective means of quelling disputes: one historian of nineteenth-century Britain has even suggested that riots were more effectively quelled by magistrates pleading with rioters than by the use of troops (Stevenson 1977: 44).

This said, the evidence regarding the use of personal appeals to quell riots is, it seems, distorted in at least one way: leaders whom the sources (or the traditions behind them) regard as immoral, cruel, or despised tend not to be portrayed as successfully employing this device. One only finds stories of the successful use of personal appeals relating to leaders who are regarded with approval or indifference, a pattern which also applies to fictional accounts which include this *topos*.⁵⁶ Granted, there are various instances of leaders of whom the author approves (or to whom he is indifferent) unsuccessfully using this approach.⁵⁷ But the inverse does not occur: there are no cases of leaders regarded by the sources as

Philostr. *VA* 1.15, 1.16, 5.26, *VS* 1.23; SHA *Did. Iul.* 4.4, *Maximus et Balbinus* 9.2–4; cf. Sen. *Clem.* 1.15.1 and Joseph. *BJ* 7.47–54 for less secure examples. Closely analogous are reports of attempts to quell mutinies through personal, charismatic appeals to the mutineers: Suet. *Iul.* 33; Tac. *Ann.* 1.18–19, 24–30, 34–44, *Hist.* 3.10, cf. 3.20–21.

⁵²Tcherikover and Fuks 1957: nos. 153, 435; Cass. Dio 69.8.1a; Hdn. 7.12.2–3; *IEph.* 2.215 = *IMagnesia* 114; Joseph. *AJ* 19.278–285; Tac. *Ann.* 14.45.2, cf. 11.13. Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians expressly rejects the option of holding a judicial inquiry into who was responsible for the rioting in Alexandria, and instead confines itself to reproaches and threats for the future: *CPJ* 153, lines 76–77.

⁵³Verg. *Aen.* 1.148–153; cf. Perseus 4.6–8.

⁵⁴Livy 2.32.8–12, 5.25.2–3; cf. *RE* “Menenius” 12 for references to later mentions of the story of Menenius at Livy 2.32.8–12.

⁵⁵*Passion of Andrew* 7 [ed. Lipsius and Bonnet, II, 1, 16–18]; *Martyrium Petri et Pauli* 61–2 [ed. Lipsius, I, 170–172]; *Acta Philippi* 24 [eds. Lipsius and Bonnet, II, 2, 13].

⁵⁶Successful personal appearances are reported in: *Acts* 19.23–41; *Epit. de Caes.* 15.9; Lucian *Alex.* 45, *Demon.* 64; Philostr. *VA* 1.15, *VS* 1.23. A successful use of an edict is reported by Cass. Dio 69.8.1a. All the fictional instances of the successful use of personal authority involve leaders of whom the sources approve: see above, 162, nn. 53–55 for references.

⁵⁷Dio Chrys. 32.72 (“Conon”); Herodian 7.12.2–3 (Balbinus); Joseph. *BJ* 2.8–9 (a *strategos* of Herod Archelaus), 2.267 (the elders of the Caesarean Jews), 2.493 (the leaders of the Alexandrian

immoral, cruel, or despised being successful in this way. They always fail.⁵⁸ Since it is unlikely that rioting crowds' judgments of leaders coincided precisely with those of our extant sources, one suspects that any stories of supposedly "bad" rulers stopping riots in this way dropped out of the tradition. This is unsurprising, given that both fictional and historical reports of the successful use of such personal authority over a crowd often stress the leader's moral worth (and sometimes his sanctity).⁵⁹

The sources also contain accounts of attempts to control or punish rioters by the use of methods other than personal appeals. Mostly these methods involved the use of troops against crowds, although there are a few mentions of other types of official response.⁶⁰ When it came to the use of troops against crowds, assessments of the moral worth of the emperor, governor, or magistrate commanding the troops again were relevant. There are various reports of emperors using soldiers to massacre crowds that were guilty only of verbal protests or insults, often uttered at a public spectacle. Every one of these incidents concerns a leader of whom the particular writer or the tradition in general disapproved: the emperors Gaius, Nero, Vitellius, Domitian, Commodus, Didius Iulianus, and Caracalla; Commodus' *cubicularius* Cleander;⁶¹ and the procurators of Judaea, Pontius Pilate and Gessius Florus. The incidents tend to be mentioned in catalogues of these leaders' alleged murderousness, *saevitia* ("cruelty") or *violentia* ("violence").⁶² On

Jews); SHA *Maximus et Balbinus* 9.2–4 (Balbinus). Seneca (*Brev. Vit.* 18.5) also expresses the general view that a hungry crowd listens neither to reasoning nor to pleas.

⁵⁸ SHA *Did. Iul.* 4.4 (Didius Iulianus); Tac. *Ann.* 14.45.2 (Nero).

⁵⁹ *Epit. de Caes.* 15.9: *usque eo . . . mitis fuit, ut . . .* ("he was so gentle that"); Verg. *Aen.* 1.151: *tum, pietate gravem ac meritis . . . virum quem conspexere, silent arrectisque auribus astant . . .* ("then they have caught sight of some man having authority by reason of piety and service, they are silent and they stand by with ears pricked up"); Livy 5.25.3: *ab horum aetatibus dignitatibusque et honoribus violandis dum absternebatur* ("While they desisted from outraging their age, worthiness, and official positions"); Livy 2.32.8–12 with 2.33.10–11. That the authors of the apocryphal acts of the apostles saw the apostles who quelled riots as men of great sanctity needs no proof, and the same applies to Philostratus and Apollonius.

⁶⁰ These types of response include: the granting of concessions to the rioters (Joseph. *BJ* 2.169–174 = *AJ* 18.55–59, *BJ* 2.184–203 = *AJ* 18.261–288, *BJ* 2.228–231 = *AJ* 20.113–117); the arrest, trial and/or punishment of some of the rioters (Joseph. *BJ* 2.269 = *AJ* 20.174; CPJ 158a and b, 435; *P Oxy.* 22.2339; Vett. Val. 5.10 p. 231 [ed. Kroll]; cf. TAM 4.1.3); the removal of a city's privileges as a free city (Cass. Dio 54.7.6, 60.17.3, Suet. *Claud.* 25.3); a ban on certain *collegia* in the offending community (*I.Eph.* 2.215 = *I.Magnesia* 114; Tac. *Ann.* 14.17); and a ban on certain types of public spectacles in the community (Tac. *Ann.* 14.17). References to such attempts to punish rioters or control future riots are too few to discern elite attitudes to these types of responses to riots.

⁶¹ *PIR*¹ C 883 = *PIR*² A 1481 = Weaver 2004: no. 1886.

⁶² Gaius: Cass. Dio 59.28.11, Joseph. *AJ* 19.24–26, Suet. *Calig.* 26.4: *superbia violentiaque* ("arrogance and violence"); Nero: Tac. *Ann.* 16.5; Vitellius: Suet. *Vit.* 14.3, cf. 13.1: *saevitia* ("cruelty"); Domitian: Suet. *Dom.* 10.1: *saevitia*; Commodus: SHA *Comm.* 15.6; Didius Iulianus: Cass. Dio 74.13.3–5 (but cf. SHA *Did. Iul.* 4.2–4.10); Caracalla: Cass. Dio 78.22–23, Hdn. 4.6.4–5: μήποτε γυνόμενον ἔργον ("an unprecedented act"), 4.8.6–9.8, SHA *M. Ant.* 6.2–3 (but cf. Benoît and Schwartz 1948); Cleander: Hdn. 1.12.6; Pontius Pilate: Joseph. *BJ* 2.175–177 = *AJ* 18.60–62; Gessius

the other hand, when rulers viewed with approval are presented as using troops against a crowd, the crowd tends to be depicted as having used actual violence first.⁶³ So it seems that for the authors of our sources and those who transmitted the traditions that stand behind these sources, it was not unthinkable for a “good” ruler to use military force against a crowd, so long as the crowd was actually behaving in a violent fashion. This principle is neatly illustrated by an anecdote in Libanius relating to Constantine: the emperor, Libanius claims, was the target of licentious shouts from the Roman people. On asking his two brothers how to respond, he was advised by one to massacre the crowd and by the other to ignore the behaviour as was “appropriate to a ruler” (βασιλικός). Constantine supposedly responded to this advice by declaring that the latter approach was the proper one, and that rulers should tolerate such unruliness.⁶⁴ Whether the anecdote is true or not, it highlights how military intervention was considered inappropriate against a crowd guilty only of verbal insults.

Further, in situations of military repression, there seems to have sometimes been an expectation that the force used to repress the crowd be moderate. This belief is given dramatic expression in the *Octavia* attributed to Seneca. A prefect (presumably a praetorian prefect) reports to Nero that the ringleaders of the violent crowd that had threatened the palace have been killed, thus stopping the riot. Nero is outraged at this, and believes that the entire crowd ought to have been massacred, a position which the prefect treats as improper and the consequence of *dolor* (“vexations,” ps.-Sen. *Oct.* 846–855). A similar disapproval of immoderate acts of repression underpins Eutropius’ report of the riot of the minters in Rome under Aurelian: the minters are portrayed as having started the riot and having committed murder before the military repression began. Nevertheless, Aurelian is said to have repressed the riot with utmost cruelty (*ultima crudelitate*),⁶⁵ which implies that there were limits that a leader should observe even when dealing with rioters guilty of violence.

Florus: Joseph. *BJ* 2.297–308: τὸ καινὸν τῆς Ῥωμαίων ὁμότητος (“the novelty of the Romans’ savagery”), 2.318–329. See too Gaius’ murderous intentions towards the Roman people, provoked by cheers: Suet. *Calig.* 30.

⁶³ It is possible that Pompey’s use of troops at the trials of Milo and Scaurus in 52 B.C. was against crowds which were guilty only of verbal unruliness. The language used to describe their behaviour is, however, ambiguous: Cass. Dio 40.53.3: θορυβησάντων . . . τινῶν (“certain people making a disturbance”); App. *B Civ.* 2.24: τοῦ δήμου τοὺς κατηγοροὺς ἐνοχλοῦντος (“the crowd having troubled the prosecutors”). In any case, given the behaviour of the pro-Clodian crowds earlier in the year, it may be that Dio and Appian saw Pompey as responding at least to a threat of violence.

⁶⁴ Lib. *Or.* 19.19: . . . τοὺς δὲ κρατοῦντας πρέπειν ἀνέχεσθαι τῶν τοιούτων σκιρτημάτων . . . ; cf. *Or.* 20.24.

⁶⁵ Eutrop. 9.14. Other reports of the same incident also comment on the cruelty of Aurelian’s repression, although they do not state explicitly that the minters had been the first to employ violence: *Epit. de Caes.* 35.4: . . . quos Aurelianus victos ultima crudelitate compescuit (“whom Aurelian repressed with utmost cruelty when they were defeated”); SHA *Aurel.* 38.2: quod acerrime severissimeque compescuit (“he repressed it severely and harshly”).

This belief that troops should only be used against violent crowds, and then only in moderation, does not, however, run through all the reports of riots in which military repression occurred. Texts which focus strongly on the impropriety of the crowd's violent actions tend to offer no opinion as to whether the military action was moderate or excessive, and usually offer no details about it which might invite such a judgment.⁶⁶ At times we are not even told whether the crowd behaved violently in the first place, so as to provoke such a military response (Tac. *Ann.* 1.77). This is illustrated by Cicero's response in 44 B.C. to the repression of Amatius, the "false Marius." Appian claims that Amatius threatened violence against Brutus and Cassius, and that his supporters actually rioted (*B Civ.* 3.2–3). But Cicero does not concern himself with the details of the behaviour of Amatius or his supporters, or whether the repressive actions of M. Antonius and Dolabella were appropriate. Instead, he praises the consuls (especially Dolabella) fulsomely, and heaps abuse on Amatius and his followers.⁶⁷ This disregard for the details of the situation was apparently not universal: Appian claims that the senate was torn between shock at the illegality of Amatius' execution and the expediency of being rid of him (*B Civ.* 3.3). Cicero also hints at disapproval of Dolabella's actions on the part of certain people (*Att.* 14.15 [= SB 369].2), whose numbers included Pansa (*Att.* 14.19 [= SB 372].2) and possibly Atticus,⁶⁸ although he does not make the substance of these objections clear. Given his disdain for the mob, Tacitus also tends to ignore details about the nature of the repressive action and the prior behaviour of the crowd, although he is by no means alone in this.⁶⁹ In other words, the principle of moderation in repression was one that could be selectively invoked, depending on whether the author (or his sources) wished to make a judgment on the authority behind the repressive action or on the propriety of the crowd's behaviour.

Various writers from the east of the empire give a slightly different nuance to their reports of the use of troops against crowds by "good" rulers: even when the crowd has behaved violently from the start, the use of troops is presented as the last resort, employed only after other techniques of riot control have failed. In such cases, the final military action might be presented as quite drastic and unrestrained, but it is implicitly justified as being the last resort. In his account of "Conon"⁷⁰ confronting a rioting Alexandrian crowd, Dio Chrysostom claims that he at first attempted to avoid engaging the crowd with the soldiers whom he had under his command and simply spoke to it. Only when the crowd engaged

⁶⁶ Cass. Dio 54.6.6; Tac. *Ann.* 3.14 (cf. Eck 1996: 250–251), 12.43, 13.48, 14.61; Suet. *Tib.* 37.

⁶⁷ Cic. *Att.* 14.8.1 [= Shackleton Bailey ed. (SB), 362.1], 14.15 [= SB 369].1–2, 14.16 [= SB 370].2, 14.17a [= SB 371a], 14.19 [= SB 372], *Fam.* 9.14 [= SB 326], 12.1 [= SB 327.1], *Phil.* 1.5, 1.30, 2.107.

⁶⁸ Cic. *Att.* 14.15 [= SB 369].2: *nunc prorsus adsentio tuis litteris speroque meliora* ("Now I absolutely agree with your letter and hope for better circumstances"); cf. 14.16 [= SB 370].2, 14.19 [= SB 372].1.

⁶⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 1.77, 3.14 (cf. Eck 1996: 250–251), 12.43, 14.61, *Hist.* 4.3; cf. Cass. Dio 54.6.5.

⁷⁰ Cf. above, 157, n. 29.

with the soldiers did he unleash the full fury of military repression against the rioters.⁷¹

A similar gradated response to rioting is found in Josephus. For example, he claims that, during the disorders that broke out in 4 B.C. at the death of Herod the Great, in what was then the client kingdom of Judaea, Archelaus began by wishing to use persuasion rather than force by sending a general (στρατηγός) to reason with the threatening crowd. When the crowd stoned the general, Archelaus then supposedly sent a cohort to seize or restrain by force (βίβη . . . κατασχεῖν) only the ringleaders of the riot. When this failed, so Josephus claims, Archelaus formed the view that it was now impossible to restrain the crowd without killing members of it and so initiated a large-scale military action against it.⁷² Josephus attributes a similar approach to a Roman official as well. During a riot between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria, the prefect Ti. Julius Alexander (who was himself of Jewish origin) began by sending a delegation of well-known men to the Jews in an attempt to convince them to desist without recourse to arms. Josephus—interestingly sympathizing with the prefect rather than with the Jewish community—claims that it was only when this failed that Alexander understood that only a great misfortune would restrain the Jews' rebelliousness, and sent troops to kill Jewish rioters and plunder their property.⁷³ This attempt to quell the riot by having well-known (and presumably Jewish) members of the community make personal appeals is partially paralleled in various other reports about riots from the east of the empire, in which a local magistrate or prominent local figure is found pleading with the rioters to desist before they provoke Roman intervention.⁷⁴ Whether these details are fictitious or reflections of actual behaviour, they in any case indicate a preference on the part of the élites of the East to be allowed to deal with public order problems in their own communities

⁷¹Dio Chrys. 32.71–73. Jones (1997: 253) has tentatively suggested that Dio Chrysostom here refers to two incidents: a minor riot (ταραχή) put down by “Conon,” and then a later major riot or rebellion (πόλεμος), which he would connect with the disorders prompted by the arrival of Jewish Sicarii in Alexandria (cf. Joseph. *BJ* 7.407–419; Lib. *Or.* 20.30–32; Jer. *Chron.* p. 188 [ed. Helm]). It is, however, more natural to read the passage as referring to a single event which escalated from a minor riot into a major one. In §73 Dio argues that he is justified in mentioning these events, since recalling them will help the Alexandrians understand the outcomes (τὰ φύμενα) of their disorderliness. If the incident in §72 to which Conon responded is read as separate from the πόλεμος, then the justificatory argument in §73 breaks down, since the disorder to which Conon responded would seem to have had no consequences, beyond some taunting from Conon.

⁷²Joseph. *AJ* 17.206–218 = *BJ* 2.4–13. *BJ* 2.12: . . . οὐ μὴν Ἀρχελάφ διχα φόνου καθεκτὸν ἔτι τὸ πλῆθος ἐφαίνετο . . . (“It appeared to Archelaus that the crowd could not be restrained without bloodshed . . .”).

⁷³Joseph. *BJ* 2.490–498: Κάκεῖνος [sc. Τιβέριος] συνιδὼν ὡς χωρὶς μεγάλης συμφορᾶς οὐκ ἂν παύσαιντο νεωτερίζοντες For a similar case, see *BJ* 2.270 = *AJ* 20.177. In *AJ* 20.105–112 (cf. *BJ* 2.224–227) the procurator Cumanus attempts to quell a verbal protest with personal persuasion before bringing in his entire army, the sight of which causes a lethal stampede.

⁷⁴*Acts* 19.23–41; Dio Chrys. 46.14; Joseph. *BJ* 2.267, 2.316, 2.320–325; cf. Joseph. *BJ* 2.237, *AJ* 17.212, 20.121.

without Roman involvement.⁷⁵ This preference receives its clearest expression in Aelius Aristides' *Roman Oration*. Rome, claims Aristides, has managed to retain its empire not through the imposition of garrisons, but through the extension of citizenship to local élites, which means that "there is no need for garrisons to hold their citadels, but the men of greatest standing and influence in every city guard their own fatherlands for you [i.e., the Romans]" (*Or.* 26.64). Elsewhere in the oration Aristides claims that there are no garrisons in the cities,⁷⁶ a fact which distinguishes the Roman empire from that of Athens (which garrisoned subject cities to the detriment of its hegemony; 26.52). Of course, as an account of how order was maintained in the empire, this is at best distorted and at worst pure fantasy: Roman forces were used to maintain order in cities on occasion, and several major cities were garrisoned, including Aristides' own city of Alexandria. The fact that Aristides would offer such a disingenuous picture shows how strong the preference in the East was for local élites to take care of order in their own cities. Accounts of riots from eastern sources often conform with this view. They tend to believe that Romans will intervene if the attempts of local authorities to quell a riot fail. They are therefore still assuming that the imperial authorities are interested in seeing riots quelled and rioters punished, but they expect that the imperial authorities will provide an opportunity for local élites to do this first.⁷⁷

IV. WHAT HAPPENED WHEN ATTEMPTS TO REPRESS RIOTS MILITARILY WERE MADE?

A number of reports about the repression of riots through the use of military force contain claims about what happened when the soldiers engaged with the crowd. It has been suggested that military responses to riots in Rome were swift and decisive: a complaint would be made to the authorities; soldiers would be dispatched; and order would be restored.⁷⁸ Generally, it has been said, the mere

⁷⁵ Libanius (*Or.* 19.31–5) even felt the need to justify to Theodosius why the magistrates of Antioch in 387 did not intervene when rioters destroyed images of the emperor, which suggests that he assumed that the imperial authorities expected such intervention of local political élites. For the role of local élites in the East in keeping order, see Plut. *Mor.* 814e–816a and Yannakopoulos 2003: 881–883. Erdkamp (2002: 106) also notes that reports of food riots written by eastern authors portray the crowd as looking toward the local élite rather than the imperial authorities for solutions to shortages of food.

⁷⁶ Aristid. *Or.* 26.29, 67a; cf. Behr 1981: 87, 376, n. 73 for the meaning of the latter passage.

⁷⁷ Of course Josephus is not entirely consistent on this point: as seen above (160) he expects swift Roman intervention when an anti-Jewish riot was in progress, but when a Jewish crowd was rioting, he seems to have favoured a graduated response by the Roman authorities, with an opportunity for Jewish leaders to calm the situation being given first.

⁷⁸ Yavetz 1969: vii, 10, 12; Yavetz 1986: 173; Griffin 1991: 40; Vanderbroek 1987: 159. For more general assertions about the effectiveness of troops in checking disorder, see Africa 1971: 8, 19; MacMullen 1966: 164; Oost 1961: 2. Nippel (1995: 98) also asserts that there was a dramatic improvement in the government's capacity to quell riots with the coming of the principate, but stresses the importance in the equation of the presence or absence of the political will to use troops.

threat of military repression was enough to control riots.⁷⁹ A pair of parallel passages in Josephus report that an unruly crowd fled at the mere sight of a large military force, the crowd's panic being so great that a lethal stampede ensued (*BJ* 2.226–227 = *AJ* 20.111.112). One passage in Tacitus would appear to suggest that the sight of soldiers was enough to repress disorder in various Campanian towns in 69 (*Hist.* 4.3). A passage in Herodian seems to support this as a general proposition: Herodian has Maximinus Thrax claim that the bravery of the Roman crowd extends only to shouting and that they need only see a soldier to flee in panic, trampling each other (7.8.6). One doubts, however, whether Herodian meant this to be taken seriously rather than as an example of Maximinus' deluded bravado. In fact, soon afterwards Herodian claims that, on the appointment of Maximus, a crowd in Rome took a strong stand against the new emperor, stopping him from leaving the Capitol, and even resisting an armed bodyguard of veterans and equestrian youth. Only the appointment by the senate of Gordian III as emperor calmed the people (7.10.7). This passage may even be designed to undermine Maximinus' claims about the behaviour of the crowd in the face of armed military opposition, and so show how dogged loyalty (in this case to the Gordiani) could prompt resistance to military repression on the part of a crowd. There are various other instances in which crowds are said to have defied soldiers. For instance, Asconius claims that the Clodians who surrounded the court in which Milo was tried were not restrained by fear of Pompey's encircling soldiers.⁸⁰ Cassius Dio claims that on the same occasion the Clodian crowd responded with jeers to the soldiers' attempt to drive it from the Forum, its members behaving as if they were being struck in some sort of game (40.53.3). He also says that when Dolabella stirred up a riot in 47 B.C., the more rioters M. Antonius slaughtered, the more disorderly the survivors became (42.33.1).

Further, at times crowds are presented as being not only defiant, but also somewhat successful in their defiance. It is true that some reports of military repression present the soldiers' actions as fairly swift and clinical. Interestingly, these incidents mostly are said to have occurred in relatively open, flat areas of cities, such as the fora and the areas outside imperial residences.⁸¹ Accounts of

⁷⁹ Griffin 1991: 40.

⁸⁰ Asc. 41–42 C: *qui* [sc. *Clodiani*] *se continere ne metu quidem circumstantium militum potuerunt* (“[the supporters of Clodius] . . . who were not able to restrain themselves even with the fear of the surrounding soldiers”).

⁸¹ App. *B Civ.* 2.24 (Roman Forum); Cass. Dio 40.53.3 (Roman Forum); Suet. *Tib.* 37 (Forum of Pollentia); Tac. *Ann.* 12.43 (Roman Forum); Hdn. 1.12.6–8 (cf. 1.12.5: ἐν προαστείῳ Κομόδου, “in Commodus' suburban villa”; Cass. Dio 72.13.4 with Andermahr 1998: 408–409); SHA *Did. Iul.* 4.2–6 (Roman Forum, cf. Cass. Dio 74.13.4); Hdn. 7.12.4 (in front of the *castra Praetoriana*). There are various riots whose details are less clear, but which might be examples of the same assumption. If Eck (1996: 250–251) is right to read Tac. *Ann.* 3.14 as implying the use of troops by Tiberius, then this is an instance of an account of successful riot repression on the *scalae Gemoniae* and the north-western end of the Forum. The successful use of troops by Nero to restrain crowds wishing to free the condemned slaves of L. Pedanius Secundus in 62 (Tac. *Ann.* 14.45) may have taken place in

riots in which the rioters are said to have been in or on top of buildings, or in narrow streets, portray rather more successful resistance to military repression.⁸² In his account of a crowd's attack on Octavian and M. Antonius in 38 B.C., Appian seems to imply that Antonius and his troops had difficulty physically extracting Octavian from the situation. The attack took place just off the Forum, in a cramped area of the Via Sacra surrounded by houses.⁸³ Accounts of theatre riots in the first century A.D. also assume that soldiers met with difficulties in keeping order. Tacitus reports that soldiers stationed at the theatre in Rome were killed trying to stop a theatre riot in A.D. 15.⁸⁴ A number of sources claim that even after this event rioting continued to break out in the theatre under Tiberius.⁸⁵ There are also various lurid stories about Nero watching (and even participating in) theatre riots, in spite of the presence of soldiers.⁸⁶ Cassius Dio assumes that the riots were made worse when Nero deliberately removed the soldiers from the theatre, and Tacitus assumes that the reintroduction of the soldiers was in some way part of the cure for this escalation of theatre violence (Cass. Dio 61.8.3; Tac. *Ann.* 13.25). A military presence at the theatre is not considered to have been totally useless, therefore; by the same token, the sources assume that a certain amount of rioting occurred in spite of it.

Other accounts of riots during both the first and the third centuries describe pitched battles between the people and soldiers. Reports of the Flavian capture of Rome in 69 portray the supporters of Vitellius, many of whom were apparently civilians (Tac. *Hist.* 3.80), inflicting considerable casualties on soldiers by pelting them from the tops of houses with roof tiles, javelins, and stones (Tac. *Hist.* 3.82; Cass. Dio 64.19.3). Herodian reports riots in both 190 and 238 in which crowds allegedly resisted troops by throwing roof tiles, stones, and pots at them from the roofs of houses.⁸⁷ Herodian asserts that in 190 the battle stopped only when the people were granted their wish: the head of Cleander. In 238, he claims, the soldiers were forced to set fire to the houses which the crowd was using, thereby

the broad, open thoroughfares of the Argiletum and *clivus suburanus*. These roads were the logical route between the Mamertine Prison, in which the slaves would have been held, and the *Campus Esquilinus*, the usual place of execution for slaves: see Hengel 1977: 54; Hinard 1987: 113.

⁸² Cf. Caes. *B Civ.* 3.106–107 for the claim that rioters inflicted losses on Roman soldiers, without any specific information about where in Alexandria this occurred.

⁸³ App. *B Civ.* 5.68: ὁ Ἀντώνιος μόλις . . . παρήλθε . . . (“Antonius only just got in . . .”).

⁸⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 1.77; cf. Cass. Dio 57.14.4.

⁸⁵ Theatre riots under Tiberius: Cass. Dio 57.14.4; Suet. *Tib.* 37; Cass. Dio 57.21.3. The continued presence of soldiers at the theatre under Tiberius is suggested by the fact that during the reign of Nero there were soldiers stationed at the theatre (Cass. Dio 61.8.3; Tac. *Ann.* 13.25), and that Dio treats this as a long-standing practice.

⁸⁶ Cass. Dio 61.8.2–3; Suet. *Ner.* 26; Tac. *Ann.* 13.25. This cannot be ascribed to a real or imagined unwillingness on the part of the soldiers to deprive the emperor of his raucous pleasures, since Dio and Tacitus both emphasize that at times Nero watched and participated in the riots secretly.

⁸⁷ Hdn. 1.12.8–9, 7.12.5–7. Cassius Dio's rather different version of the riot of 190 (72.13) also records the crowd's resistance to troops sent by Cleander, without giving any details.

compelling the rioters to come to terms. The accounts in the *Historia Augusta* of the events of 238 contain similar details.⁸⁸ One suspects that a similar incident lies behind the laconic report in the epitome of Book 80 of Cassius Dio that, during the lifetime of the jurist Ulpian,⁸⁹ a great quarrel arose between the people and the praetorians, which led to a three-day battle with heavy losses on both sides. The praetorians, it is said, getting the worst of things, started setting fire to buildings (80.2.3). Finally, the rebellion of mint workers in Rome under Aurelian is said by Aurelius Victor and the author of the *Historia Augusta* to have been repressed with heavy loss of life to the soldiers.⁹⁰ Victor puts the battle on the Caelian Hill, and this fact is perhaps confirmed by the radical refurbishment of the mint in the late third century, which could suggest the battle took place in the mint or on the slope of the Caelian hill closest to it (Steinby, *Lexicon* 3.280–281).

These assumptions about the results of military attempts at repression were not just held by the élite in the west of the empire. For Josephus claims that, during the disorders of 4 B.C., Archelaus dispatched a cohort to seize the ringleaders of a riot in Jerusalem. The crowd proceeded to stone most of the cohort to death, and it was only with the use of his entire army that Archelaus repressed the riots (*BJ* 2.11–13). Later in the same year, Josephus claims, a crowd in Jerusalem held its own against a force of Roman soldiers by throwing projectiles from the top of a porticus in the Temple complex. The Romans only gained the upper hand after burning down the porticus (*BJ* 2.39–50 = *AJ* 17.254–264). Josephus also mentions in his account of the disorders in Alexandria during the prefecture of Ti. Julius Alexander that the Alexandrian Jews resisted the Roman forces for some time, and inflicted casualties on Roman soldiers (*BJ* 2.495). He also states that during the disorders of 66, a crowd in Jerusalem actually put a Roman force to flight by throwing missiles from roofs and by blocking its progress through narrow alleys (*BJ* 2.328–329).⁹¹

It is difficult to know to what degree these accounts of rioters resisting soldiers are fictitious. It could be that the perception that crowds at spectacles were unruly was so ingrained that it was automatically assumed that the disorder continued, in spite of military presence. One also finds descriptions of crowds pelting soldiers from rooftops with tiles and stones in authors from Thucydides onwards,⁹² although these descriptions are perhaps not similar enough in language and detail to suggest a literary dependence.⁹³ It has certainly been shown that many details in Herodian's account of the battle between a crowd and soldiers in

⁸⁸ SHA *Maximus et Balbinus* 10.7, *Max.* 20.6.

⁸⁹ Presumably during his praetorian prefecture, in about 222/3 (cf. *PIR*² D 169; *P Oxy.* 31.2565).

⁹⁰ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.6, SHA *Aurel.* 38.2–4.

⁹¹ See too Joseph. *BJ* 2.269–270 for a description of another attempt to repress rioting militarily which was not an unqualified success.

⁹² Thuc. 2.4, 3.74; Diod. Sic. 13.56.7–8; Livy 34.39.1–7; Sall. *Iug.* 67.1; Plut. *Sull.* 9.6; see further Barry 1996.

⁹³ See Alföldy 1989: 110, n. 51, commenting on Dopp's (*RE* "Herodianus" 3: 955) suggestion that there was a literary relationship between Thuc. 2.4 and Hdn. 1.12.8–9.

190 are simply creative extrapolations from—or fictitious additions to—Cassius Dio’s account of the same incident, and that these additions probably include the description of the crowd pelting soldiers with stones and roof tiles.⁹⁴ Herodian may indeed have projected some of the details of the riots of 238 back onto the riot of 190, an action which is explained in part by the fact that he was probably an eyewitness to the events of 238, and in part by his stress on the contrast between unarmed civilians and armed soldiers (Alföldy 1989: 110).

In any case, and whatever their historical value, these reports show that members of the élite of the empire believed (rightly or wrongly) that the military repression of riots could be a bloody and complex affair. It is noteworthy that in their descriptions of clashes between crowds and soldiers, these engagements are often called wars⁹⁵ and the sources often use language that stresses the bloodshed and the damage to the city. Cassius Dio (64.19.3) claims that the damage visited on the Flavian forces by stone- and tile-throwing Vitellians contributed directly to the (suspiciously round) figure of fifty thousand killed during the Flavian assault. Herodian (1.12.9) claims that in 190, many (πολλοί) soldiers were killed by stones and tiles hurled by the crowd. He also claims that in 238, the fires started by the soldiers to flush rioters out of the *insulae* “burned down the greater part of the city,” an area that was “greater in extent than the entire size of the largest cities elsewhere,” and thereby impoverished many (πολλοί) people.⁹⁶ The author of the *Historia Augusta* life of Maximus and Balbinus reports the matter in similar terms.⁹⁷ Cassius Dio (80.2.3) likewise claims that the riot during the lifetime of Ulpian was a “great dissension” (στάσις μεγάλη), that many (πολλοί) were killed on both sides, and that the people feared that the fires lit by the soldiers would destroy the whole city (πᾶσα ἡ πόλις). The author of the *Historia Augusta* and Aurelius Victor both claim that the rebellion of the mint workers under Aurelian resulted in the deaths of seven thousand soldiers (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.6; SHA *Aurel.* 38.2–4). Victor gives this (rather high) figure to illustrate the seriousness of the event, and the *Historia Augusta* cites what purports to be a letter written by Aurelian in which the emperor claims that the gods have not granted him victory over the minters without hardship.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Alföldy (1989: 93–115, esp. 109–110) convincingly rejects the contention of Whittaker (1964: 350–351, 1969–70: 1.83) that Herodian’s account of the fall of Cleander is more reliable at points than that of Cassius Dio.

⁹⁵ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.6: . . . *bellum* . . . (“war”); Hdn. 1.13.1: . . . πολέμου ἐμφυλίου . . . (“civil war”), 7.11.6: ἐμφυλίον πολέμον . . . ; SHA *Aurel.* 38.2–3: . . . *bellum* . . .

⁹⁶ Hdn. 7.12.6: . . . μέγιστον μέρος τῆς πόλεως τὸ πῦρ ἐνεμήθη . . . (“the fire burned down a very great part of the city”), §7: τοσοῦτον δὲ μέρος τῆς πόλεως τὸ πῦρ ἐλυμήνατο ὥς μηδεμίαν τῶν μεγίστων πόλεων ὁλόκληρον δύνασθαι τῷ μέρει ἐξισωθῆναι (“the fire ruined a part of the city larger than the entire size of any of the other great cities”). Cf. 7.11.6.

⁹⁷ SHA *Maximus et Balbinus* 10.7: *atque ideo maior pars civitatis periit et multorum divitiae* (“and in this way the greater part of the city was destroyed and also the fortunes of many”).

⁹⁸ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.6: . . . *bellum fecerant* [sc. *monetae opifices*] *usque eo grave, uti per Coelium montem congressi septem fere bellatorum milia confecerint* (“[The mint workers] . . . fought a war so serious, that having gathered on the Caelian Hill, they killed almost seven thousand soldiers”). SHA

V. CONCLUSION: RIOTS AND IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY

The many reports of riots contained in the sources relevant to the history of the Roman principate cannot with confidence be used to build a picture of what the Roman authorities actually tended to do in response to riots. Given the nature of the phenomenon of rioting and the partisan passions it sparks, the quality of information at the disposal of the authors of the extant sources cannot inspire confidence. Further, various motifs run throughout these reports, motifs which often look conventionalized, and perhaps could even be seen as literary *topoi*. But reports of riots do tell us something about elite ideas about what should and did happen when the authorities responded to them.

Reading the sources with an eye to this issue reveals that, whatever may have happened in practice, our elite authors did not believe that the imperial authorities should (or did) repress rioting only when it threatened the position or dignity of a particular emperor, magistrate or governor. Rather, the responses of our authors to the question of riot control were intimately bound up with various strands of discourse that might be grouped under the rubric of “imperial ideology.” The emperor (and by extension subordinate imperial officials) were expected to respond to riots, whatever their nature and goals. This was part of the general expectation that the emperor should (and did) repress piracy, banditry, and other threats to public order. The answer to the question of what the imperial authorities ought to do in response to a riot in a given situation was, in turn, often bound up with the ideology of clemency and moderation: a good ruler should avoid the use of force to quell a riot, and instead attempt personal persuasion, thereby sparing the rioters (and the troops) from the horrors of an engagement between the crowd and soldiers. It was also felt that, if a leader was forced by the crowd’s violent behaviour to use military repression, this should be done in moderation, and should not be a massacre. As for merely verbal demonstrations on the part of the crowd, it was considered inappropriate for the emperor or subordinate officials to use military forces to silence it. This view is surely connected with the general expectation that the emperor should listen to and consider seriously the shouted petitions of the crowd, especially at public spectacles (Millar 1992: 368–375). Responding to such shouts with a massacre is an example *par excellence* of the emperor failing to meet this expectation. The idea that the emperor should tolerate the jeers of the crowd is also to be linked with the general expectation that an emperor should overlook mere verbal insults.⁹⁹

Of course, one does not find a perfectly logical set of ideas about riots: such perfect consistency is not to be expected when examining the ideologies of many elite authors spread over several centuries. Some authors report riots in a way that shows little interest in whether it was a violent crowd against which troops were

Aurel. 38.4: *apparet nullam mihi a dis immortalibus datam sine difficultate victoriam* (“it seems that no victory has been given by the immortal gods without hardship”).

⁹⁹*Tac. Ann.* 3.49–51; *Julian Miso.* 355–356, 365d.

used, or whether soldiers were used in a moderate fashion; this is particularly the case if an author is focused on the perceived impropriety of the crowd's behaviour, or the baseness of crowds in general. Further, the views of various writers from the east of the empire (particularly those from the earlier part of the principate) differ from those of their western counterparts on some issues connected with riot control, whilst being similar on others. This is what we would expect of a Graeco-Roman governing class that was "partially integrated" culturally.¹⁰⁰ Eastern writers like Philo, Josephus, Dio Chrysostom, and Aelius Aristides at times stress the importance of local élites in preserving order, and are found presenting military solutions to riots as an absolute last resort. Such authors assume that the imperial authorities are still interested in whether order is maintained, and some Jewish writers when describing riots against Jews are sometimes even found stressing the obligation of these authorities to intervene. Nevertheless, the general tendency in our eastern sources is ambivalence toward Roman involvement in riots, particularly military involvement.

As well as often operating within various discourses of "imperial ideologies," the reports about riots considered above might help to explain some elements of official ideology. Whether or not we believe that the permanent stationing of troops in Rome and various other metropoleis actually represented a revolution in the maintenance of law and order, the fact remains that many of our ancient authors are less than enthusiastic about the capacities of troops to repress riots. These members of the élites of the empire evidently believed that attempts at military riot repression, although always successful in the end, could involve bloodbaths for soldiers as much as for rioters, and that at times the soldiers' only resort was to start burning parts of the city to flush rioters out of the buildings they were using, a tactic which was decidedly dangerous in a pre-industrial city with no mechanized fire-fighting apparatus. This belief in the potential destructiveness of clashes between soldiers and crowds helps to explain the general preference for the use of personal appeals to quell riots. It also may help to explain both the elaborate attempts of élites to win the favour of the urban masses, and the measures designed to prevent riots before they occurred. Thus, the apparent contradiction between the permanent military presence in major cities under the principate and the continued efforts of emperors and élites to win the favour of the urban masses turns out not to be such a contradiction at all.

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¹⁰⁰The phrase is Millar's (2002: 71).

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